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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Identical letters dated 28 January 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write in connection with the letter dated 17 January 2008, from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations, on behalf of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, addressed to the Secretary-General (A/62/652-S/2008/28).

The Non-Aligned Movement's condemnation of the recent situation in the Gaza Strip and its pointed blame of Israel demonstrate a failure to adequately understand the realities on the ground. In 2005, Israel disengaged from the Gaza Strip with the hope that the Palestinian Authority would govern the area responsibly. Regrettably this did not happen, and more than 4,200 Qassam rockets and mortar shells have been fired by Palestinian terrorists in Gaza at the civilian population in southern Israel since then.

Palestinian terrorism, stewarded by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, makes security measures in the area a necessity in order to adequately protect Israeli civilians. Hamas cynically fires on border-crossings, forcing closures and hampering the efforts of Israel and the international community to deliver humanitarian aid and relief. Recently, Hamas has even attempted to smuggle explosives and weapons materiel into Gaza using humanitarian convoys. Moreover, Hamas diverts fuel from domestic generators to produce Qassam rockets. In contrast, Israel allows electricity and fuel, as well as medicines, into the Gaza Strip.

Israel will defend itself from all armed attacks, as any other nation would, according to its inherent right under article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. Israel has repeatedly pressed the United Nations to denounce all acts of violence and terrorism, and condemn States that aid and abet terrorists groups, which is a violation of their obligations under international law, in particular Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), among other resolutions. Yet the violence and support for terrorism continues unabated.

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My delegation fully believes that responsible members of the international community can play a constructive role by supporting the bilateral process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This means, however, taking a balanced approach to the conflict and not a one-sided stance on the issues, as the statement of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries unfortunately reflects. Indeed, we saw the harmful effects of one-sided rhetoric in the recent resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Clearly, such initiatives do not benefit peace and threaten the possibility for reconciliation and agreement between the two sides.

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 17 and 18, of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dan **Gillerman**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative